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A

TRANSLATION

OF THE

PHILOSOPHICAL DISCOURSE

ON THE

LOVE OF GOD;

EXPLAINING THE SENTIMENTS

OF THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY.

BY

CHEVALIER RAMSAY.

GLASGOW:

PRINTED BY ROBERT AND ANDREW FOULIS

M.DCC.LXVII.

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DISCOURSE
ON THE
LOVE OF GOD.

PART I.

THE PROOFS OF PURE LOVE.

THIS disinterested virtue has been always that Prelate's favourite doctrine: the source of his disgraces, and of his glory. The key to all his principles, the great spring that gave motion to his heart, and what unravels his whole life. To give a just idea of his sentiments on this doctrine is to paint him in the essential feature. This is what I am going to do; and, as much as I can, in his

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own words. * His adversaries say, that he has got this doctrine, only in the flights of his own beautiful imagination; and not at all in the ideas of pure reason. This is what obliges me to go back to first principles. First I shall deduce from these the proofs of this doctrine. Then I shall make it appear, that it is the source of all noble sentiments. Lastly I shall show, that it has been the idea of all the great philosophers. In the second part will be found the answers to all the objections.

† I. The Sovereign Being knows himself, and loves himself. His love for himself is not a blind motion, but an inlightned compla-

* The plan of this discourse.

† The first proof from the idea of God.

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cency founded on the view of his own perfection. He loves all his creatures in proportion as they resemble him more or less. The perfection of God is the primitive rule of his love for himself, and for all other beings. But the most perfect rule of finite wills, is, undoubtedly that of the infinite will. Consequently, the universal law of all intelligences is, to love God for his own sake; and, all things for his sake. God does not act in this, as an arbitrary law-giver; who might have given another law to his creatures: it is a necessary, unchangeable, eternal law; which flows from his nature; and from which he can neither exempt himself, nor any reasonable being.

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* II. Such is the greatness of God, that he can create nothing but for himself. He has need of nothing; but he desires all, because all is due to him. When he creates, he but represents outwardly, what is within. Reasonable beings are his living images. He cannot create an intelligence capable of hating itself: because every creature is good, as it resembles its Original. But in loving itself, the creature ought to love itself only as far as it is lovely. Now so far only it exists, and so far is lovely, as God communicates to it continually its existence, and perfection. It ought not then to love itself but with regard to him. Self love, when well regulated, is but

* From the nature of man.

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a consequence, and not at all the source of our love for God. The love of the infinitely great, for which, we are made, ought to be the reason of our love for the infinitely little, for which we are not made. This is the fundamental law of the creation. The creature exalting itself into a false divinity, can do nothing, think nothing, will nothing but for itself, and for its own glory.

* III. Order is founded on the different degrees of reality, which God has given every being. To love according to order, is to love every creature according to the rank it holds in the infinite scale of beings, which descends gradually from the supreme being down

* From the idea of order.

to the least created being, as in inanimate things, the greatness of the force constitutes the greatness of the motion; the same way, in intelligent beings, the greatness of the reality, or perfection ought to constitute the measure of our love. Without this order, the harmony of the celestial spirits would be continually disturbed: they have not all the same degree of bliss, because all have not an equal capacity. They are not however jealous of one another. They see clearly the beauty of that order, which we do not see. They adhere continually to whatever they see. And this acquiescence constitutes their love.

* IV. Love is the motion of the

* Proofs drawn from sentiment.

THE LOVE OF GOD. 7

soul, by which it tends, unites, and attaches itself to the objects it perceives. We may attach ourselves to an object, either for the perfection we discover in it; or, for the pleasure it gives us. 'Tis the excellence of the object, that constitutes the perfection of our love. The more perfect an object is, the more is our love imperfect if we tend to that object from an unworthy motive. If I love God for this reason alone that he gives me pleasure, 'tis not he, whom I love, but myself. I tend toward him, and attach myself to him, it is true; but my tendency and attachment is only upon my own account. True love is, on the contrary, a justice we render to the excellence of what we love. Its Nature is, to go out of itself, to

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forget itself, to sacrifice itself for the object beloved. To will nothing but what it wills. In its happiness to find our own. What is else, is but accidental, and has no place in the essence of true love.

* V. When we spake of human love, the imagination imitates these lineaments of the sovereign reason. It applies them ill; but it finds them in the constitution of our being. In all the pictures, which are made us of the noble passions, we interest ourselves no farther for the heroes, than as they expose themselves to perish for the sake of what they love. 'Tis this transport, and this forgetting of one's self which makes all the beauty, and elevation of human sentiments.

• Human and heroic love is an image of divine love.

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I agree that this transport is never real for the creature; which has neither power to carry us away from ourselves; nor right to attach us to it. Whenever we love it without relation to God, 'tis only to refer it to our own selves, either in a subtile, or gross manner. God only is able to draw us out of ourselves, by shewing us that he is infinitely lovely, and by imprinting his love on us. What is romantic, unjust, and impossible with respect to the creature is real, just, and due, to the sovereign being.

* VI. Even self-love itself, pays homage to this disinterested virtue, by the subtilities, with which it

* Delicate self-love puts on the appearance of pure love.

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seeks to put on its appearances. 'Tis only to save themselves the shame of appearing to seek their own interest in that of others, that people disguise so nicely, all the motives of self-love in friendships. Nothing is so odious, as a heart always taken up with itself. Nothing flatters us so much, as certain generous actions, which persuade both the world, and ourselves; that we have done good, for the love of goodness, without any view to ourselves. So true it is, that man, who exists, not from himself, was not made for himself. His glory and perfection is to go out of himself, that he may lose himself in the simple love of the infinite beauty.

* VII. Pure love inspires us not

* It is the source of all civil virtues.

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only with high and noble sentiments of God; but is also the source of all the fine sentiments of humanity, 'tis by this principle that we look on ourselves no longer as independent beings, created for our own sakes: but on the universe as a great family, of which all the nations are but different branches; and all mankind, relations and brothers to it; and children of one common father, whose will is, that we should prefer the good of his family to one's private interest.

* VIII. 'Tis by this pure charity, that the most common virtues are transformed into divine virtues. We become amiable, polite, disinterested; not to please men,

* It makes us amiable in society.

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to dazle and to flatter them: but to render them good, to succour them, to bear with them, and to live in peace with them, even when we cannot esteem them. This gentle and patient love of mankind is never the dupe of the wicked, or the ungrateful, because it demands nothing from them, and is content to do good, for the love of God alone, without any hope or return.

* IX. Pure love is the source of perfect friendships. “ Self love impatient, distrustful, nice and jealous; full of wants, and void of merit; suspects continually both itself and others. It grows weary, is disgusted; it becomes offended, it changes, and can rest nowhere. It sees quickly the end of

* It is the bond of perfect friendships.

THE LOVE OF GOD. 13

“ what it believed to be greatest. It
“ seeks always the perfect, but ne-
“ ver finds it. The love of God, as
“ it loves its friends without any
“ view to itself; so without flatter-
“ ing them, it loves them patiently
“ with all their faults. All is good
“ to it, provided it love what God
“ has made, and bear with the
“ want of what God has not made.”

Mr. de Cambray's doctrine carries the same sentiments throughout; in religion and in society.

* X. The idea of pure love, is a divine impression, given to man at his origin. We see the traces of it among the heathens themselves. Let us hear this transport of a Persian philosopher; “ O you who con-
“ duct me to the delights of para-

* It is the idea of all philosophers.

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“dise. ’Tis not paradise which I
“seek, but him who made para-
“dise.” On the tomb of a king of
Persia, is seen this inscription, “the
“pious man ought not to love God
“with a view of reward.”

* The emperor Marcus Antoninus, and all the true disciples of Zeno, are full of this maxim; that we must love virtue for the sake of virtue itself. ’Tis true, they believed that happiness was found in virtue: but they did not say, that we were to love virtue for the pleasure we meet with in it. On the contrary, they taught the most disinterested love of what they called the honourable. “The universe,
“said they, is but a city of which
“the gods and men are the citi-

* Marcus Antoninus.

THE LOVE OF GOD. 15

“ zens; and the supreme God, the
“ prince and common father. The
“ law, according to which this fa-
“ mily is governed, is the sove-
“ reign reason of this common fa-
“ ther. The honourable is nothing
“ else, but this eternal law; and vir-
“ tue is the worship and love of the
“ honourable, for its own perfecti-
“ on. (a)

* “ The beautiful, says Plato,
“ consists not in any of the parti-
“ cular things, on earth, or in hea-
“ ven: but the beautiful is itself,
“ by itself, always uniform to itself.
“ The love of this unchangeable
“ beautiful divinizes man; it trans-
“ ports him; it ravishes him from

(a) Cicero, of Laws, and Ends. Marcus Antonius's meditations.

* Plato.

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“ himself: man cannot be happy
 “ in himself. And the most divine
 “ thing he can do, is to go out of
 “ himself by love (*b*) as, the most
 “ unjust of all men, says the same
 “ philosopher, would be he, who
 “ while he committed all manner
 “ of crimes, should pass for just
 “ and enjoy thus the honours of
 “ virtue and the pleasures of vice.”
 So the perfect just man would be
 he, who should love justice for its
 own sake, and not for the honours
 and pleasures accompanying it:
 who should pass for unjust, while
 he practised the most exact justice:
 “ who should not suffer himself
 “ to be touched with infamies and
 “ hardships: but should remain
 “ unchangeable in the love of jus-

(*b*) In the Banquet.

THE LOVE OF GOD. 17

“ tice; not because justice is de-
“ lightful, but because it is just. (c)

“ What is the law, says Hiero-
“ cles, Philosopher of Alexandria,
“ and what is the order agreeing
“ to it; and what is the love found-
“ ed on this order. The law is the
“ intelligence which has created
“ all things. The order is the
“ rank which it has given them,
“ suitably to their dignity. The
“ love conformable to this order, is
“ to prefer what is more perfect to
“ that which is less perfect, not on-
“ ly in all the kinds, but in all the
“ different species.” (d)

In fine all the heathen law-giv-
ers, and philosophers have sup-
posed as a fundamental principle

(c) The Republic. B. 2.

(d) Dacier's translation. p. 111.

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of society as well as morality ; that we must prefer the public good to our own selves ; not from the hope of any advantage, but from the sole love of the beautiful, the good, the just, and the perfect. 'Twas to this order, they belived we ought to refer all ; and ourselves ; as much as every thing else. Nor were we to seek to render ourselves happy, by conforming to this order. On the contrary, we were to devote ourselves to perish ; to sacrifice ourselves ; to value ourselves as nothing, when the love of order required it.

We find traces of this sublime morality, which is equally distant from superstition and incredulity, in the philosophers of all countries, all times, and all religions ;

THE LOVE OF GOD 19

Indians, Chinese, Arabians, Peruvians. The universal reason, which inlightens all minds teaches the same unchangeable truths to all those who consult it with attention. The question is not here, what the heathen have done; but what they have thought themselves obliged to say, that they might speak of virtue as it deserves.

It is this philosophy, founded on the most sublime principles; source of the most noble sentiments revered by all the great men among the heathen; which Mr. de Cambray has unfolded, refined and proved, from the constant, universal, successive tradition, of the patriarchs, the prophets, and the apostles; the martyrs, the solitaires and the canonized contemplatives;

the holy fathers, the approved doctors, and the founders of the orders. Once more, it is that pure theology, which the church never meant to condemn, while it forbade the use of the faculty, and hyperbolical expressions of the saints.

Deeply struck with what is due to the Sovereign perfection, these divine lovers seemed sometimes to forget their own being and well-being at these times, they have made impossible suppositions; they had ideas which are not accurate. They have said things which appear extravagant to such as are unacquainted with the transports of love. It would be wrong to turn these transports into principles, and to justify their expressions which cannot in a literal sense be

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maintained. But the pure love, which occasioned these transports, is founded on ideas, the most sublime and exact.

PART II.

The ANSWER to the OBJECTIONS.

EVERY thing conspires then, to prove the doctrine of pure love. It has been endeavoured however, to combat such simple truths, by a thousand objections, of which these are the chief.

Pleasure is the only spring that moves the human heart. The knowledge of the beautiful acts upon us only by the pleasure it gives us. The nature and essence of the will as far as it is capable of loving, is the desire of being hap-

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py. The love of happiness is invincible. We cannot love God without loving him as making us happy. Therefore love is always interested. Let us examine these maxims one by one.

I. There is a great difference between the spring by which God moves the will, and the reason for which we yield to that motion. The mind may be seized, struck and moved by pleasure, but that does not at all diminish the purity of its love, provided that it make use of that agreeable feeling only as a help and warning to go to its true object, to render homage to his perfection, and to conform it self to order. It is in this sense, that we can love from the pleasure, without loving for the pleasure: and

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it is on this account that there are two kinds of pleasure. The one is the end in which the soul rests. The other is but a vehicle which carries it to the object beloved. The first is a pleasure which we refer to our selves; which employs us about our selves, and which makes us love objects only for the sake of our selves. It is thus, that gross, indelicate souls love whatever flatters their passions. There is another pleasure, which we refer to the object beloved, and which makes us forget ourselves, that we may be intirely employed about what we love. It is thus that noble souls love the good qualities of their friends, it is thus also that perfect lovers take pleasure in sacrificing themselves for what they

love. But their love is not therefore mercenary, that they find an infinite pleasure in loving without regard to themselves.

II. I suppose, that the knowledge of order, of the beautiful and the perfect, is always accompanied with pleasure; but that pleasure should not be the reason of our love. To love order is to acquiesce in whatever we see in it. The pleasure accompanying the knowledge of truth is not the reason for which we acquiesce in truth; as the pleasure which accompanies the view of order, is not the reason for which we acquiesce in its justice. In both cases, the pure act of the will, is independent of the sensation produced in us; and founded on the reality we perceive without

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us. Every perception supposes two things. The object, which acts on us and the sensation produced in us by its action. The object is a reality without us: the sensation is a mode of our substance.

What is called beauty, loveliness, perfection, in finite beings; is often but a sensation in us, and not at all a reality in them. It is an agreeable impression, which the author of nature produces in us by their means, and which we falsely refer to the creatures. The case is not the same in God. His perfections are realities existing in himself, and consequently we ought to distinguish them from the modalities they produce in us. But it is not loving the divine perfections, to love them only for the sensations

they cause in us. That for whose sake I love, is properly the object of my love. If I love the divine perfections only for the agreeable perceptions they produce in me, it is not these realities, that I love; but the modes of my own substance. Pleasure is my ultimate end; the divine perfection is only a mean of obtaining it. Love then, interested and disinterested, is founded on the essential distinction there is, between the transitory modalities of our finite substance, and the unchangeable perfections of the infinite essence. To love the second for the first, is to refer the infinitely great to the infinitely little, the Creator to his gifts, the eternal truths to our pleasing sensations.

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Whatever then be the spring by which God moves the will; whatever be the pleasure which accompanies the view of order; it is sure, that the reason, the rule, the end of our love, ought not to be the pleasure we feel in ourselves; but the reality we see in the object beloved. This is all that is necessary for establishing pure love. It seems to me however, that pleasure is not the only spring of motion in the human heart, and that the view of order can act on us by its own force.

III. The nature and essence of the will, as far as it is capable of loving, is its motion toward good in general. But good in general contains two kinds; absolute good; and relative good. What is good

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in itself; and what is good for us: The honourable and the agreeable, the one is measured by the degree of reality we perceived in objects; the other, by the degree of pleasure, we feel in ourselves. It is God alone who makes us see the one; and feel the other. Because it is he alone, who can act on spirits. But he can act on us as efficaciously, as the source of our knowledge, as he can do as the cause of our pleasures: and consequently the human will can have, not only two reasons of loving, but also two springs of motion. We can consent to the action of God, who moves us; either, out of respect to his adorable perfections, or, out of taste for our own pleasing sensations. God can move us, by the know-

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ledge of truth; as well as, by the feeling of pleasure. Were it not so, the sovereign being would be less powerful, as the Eternal wisdom, than as author of our corporeal sensations. There is a great difference then between the motion towards good in general; and the desire of happiness in particular. The one is but a branch of the other.

It will be said, perhaps, that to know truth, is to see it afar off, but to feel truth, is to see it at hand; and that this feeling operates on us, only by the pleasure it gives us. It seems to me on the contrary; that truth often pleases us in the speculation, and at a distance; but is uneasy to us, in the practice and approach. It is then that it contra-

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dicts our most favourite tastes, and inclinations: it shews us the sacrifices, we ought to make to the infinite being. It unveils to us, the turnings and windings of our self-love; the impurity of its virtues; and our usurpations on the rights of the divinity. This approach of truth, far from giving us pleasing sensations, pierces the heart with the sharpest pains, and yet, nevertheless, we remain faithful to it.

It is true that heroic souls are pleased with this conformity to order, but pleasure is not taken alone, for an agreeable sensation of the soul, it is taken also for a free act of the will. It is thus, that a sovereign says, in his acts "Such " is our pleasure:" that is to say,

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whatever we love, pleases us: that is to say, we will it. Pleasure in that case, is not the spring which moves the will. It is itself the very motion of the will. It is not a previous delectation occasioning our love, it is a free complacency which constitutes the very essence and exercise of our love itself.

Souls buried in matter, do not comprehend this sublime love of virtue, men ordinarily act, only by the force of a pleasure, more or less gross. But what they do, is not what they ought to do. The impotence of nature, blinded and weakened by the passions, is not the law of nature, enlightened and strengthened by the sovereign reason. God accommodates himself at first to the weakness of

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our imperfect and diseased nature. He inebriates us with celestial pleasures, to counterballance in us the weight of the terrestrial. Then we attach ourselves to virtue, for the sake of the delights that accompany it. But in proportion as the soul purifies, its love becomes more intellectual. It is always in its power to resist the divine action. But as long as the soul concurs with it, the divinity takes possession of man, raises him above himself, and makes him place his happiness in the sovereign will; and not at all in his own pleasing sensations. This is the triumph of wisdom over the human heart; this is the martyrdom of the divine love.

The Pagans seem to have had

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some idea of this two-fold kind of virtue: 'tis on that account, that Hierocles says * “ we must first become men by the moral and civil virtues: and then, gods, by the divine and super-human virtues.” His whole book is full of this maxim.

IV. The love of happiness is invincible; but there is one happiness, which consists in our pleasing sensations; and another, which consists in conformity to order. The wicked sacrifice, every day, the second to the first; the saints are able to sacrifice the first to the second. This is what most part of the celestial spirits do, and will do for a whole eternity. They have

* Hierocles' commentary on the golden verses of Pythagoras. p. 9. 7.

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not, all, the same degree of knowledge, pleasures and transports. Nevertheless, they are all happy; because they do not measure their happiness, by their own sensations, but by their conformity to the divine will. It is thus that all intelligences would be obliged to love God; supposing that, in eternity, he had given them a degree of perfection and bliss, far inferior to that of the immediate vision of his essence. 'Tis undoubtedly from these principles, that the cardinal de Noailles, and Mr. de Meaux have established it as a tenet of faith; in the articles of Issy; "That
" it is possible to inspire souls in
" pain, and truly humble, with a
" consent to the will of God;" tho' even by a very false supposition, in-

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stead of the eternal happiness promised to the just, he should keep them in eternal torments, without, however, depriving them of his grace and love. Nobody, but two prelates, so opposite to the illusions of quietism, as these were, durst have spoke this language. Nor is it necessary, for the establishing the doctrine of pure love, to push the sacrifice so far.

Further, the love of happiness is invincible, in this sense; that, as we always love ourselves, either for the sake of God, or of ourselves; so we always desire happiness, from a motive more or less noble. There is an irregular desire of happiness, which consists in willing what pleases us, what flatters us, and gives us joy; without regard to or-

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der. This desire, far from being invincible, ought to be extinguished in us for ever. But there is a regular desire of happiness, which consists in willing good to ourselves, in as far as we are images of the divinity.

This desire of happiness is never separated from pure love. For we can never love perfectly, without loving whatever belongs to, and whatever resembles the beloved. In fine, our true happiness consists in knowing, and loving the infinite perfection. The more we know of it, the more we love it. The more we love it, the more we wish to love it. For the nature of true love includes necessarily a desire of loving always; and consequently, pure love increases chaste

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hope. It does not at all destroy hope; but only perfects the motives of it. It is then we aspire to the beatific vision; not only by a general will, as we will every thing which God wills that we should will, even the most indifferent things; but, further, by a special will, as a state which unites us to the sovereign purity, consummates our love, and renders it unchangeable. Do we the less desire happiness, that we desire it from a motive worthy of God? Do we annihilate hope, by teaching that it should be animated, regulated, and ennobled by love?

V. We ought to love God as blessing us: but we ought to love him still more as sovereignly perfect. To love God, as blessing us, is to

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love him for the good things he procures to us. It is to love him for the finite participation of his gifts. It is to love him, for what he does in us; which is always infinitely little in comparison of what he is himself. To love God, for his own sake, is to love him for his immense totality. It is to love him on account of the infinite realities which are in him, although we can never see them in their whole extent. It is to love him, for what we know of him; and not for what we feel of him. It is to love without measure, the being without bounds. It is this love, which, alone, dilates, exalts, and gives a kind of immensity to the soul. But further, we cannot love God, as infinitely perfect,

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without loving him, as blessing us: because his communicative goodness, like his other attributes, is a divine perfection. This way of loving God, as blessing us, does not at all diminish the purity of our love: but to love him for this reason alone, that he can bless us, is to separate hope from charity. It is to divide what God has united: it is to confound specific motives, with theological virtues.

Weary and fatigued with these metaphysical searches, let us return to the simple, which makes always the true sublime. We ought to place all our pleasure, and all our happiness in God. But we ought not to love him only for pleasure, nor for happiness. We ought indeed to love him for his benefits,

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but we ought to love him infinitely more, for his perfections, because God infinitely surpasses all his gifts.

These are not subtle precisions of the understanding; but the delicacies of a heart capable of loving. The human heart is an excellent philosopher, when it gives itself up to be guided by the dictates of pure and simple nature, restored by grace; without having learned the vain distinctions of the school. It knows from its own feelings, how to separate the interests of the beloved from those of the lover: but it is necessary to be a lover, to know the effects of love. It is necessary to have experienced the power of the divine love, to be

THE LOVE OF GOD. 41

able to know how far it can exalt the human heart.

Such are the lessons I have learned from Mr. de Cambray. If there be any thing good in this discourse, I owe it to him. I have only related what he has often told me. This analysis of his principles was wanting to his history, and I have undertaken it only, to make this prelate known, by his sentiments, as well as by his actions. It is thus that my respect and gratitude follow him, even in the grave.

F I N I S.

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able to know how far it can exalt
the human heart.
Such intellectual have learn-
ed from Mr. de Cansbury. If there
be any thing good in this dis-
course I owe it to him. I have on-
ly related what he has often told
me. This is his prin-
ciple was written in his history,
and I have written it only to
make this prelate known, by his
testimony, as well as by his ac-
tion. It is his charity, respect and
affection follow him, even in the



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